



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

**For Immediate Release:
May 19, 2011**

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HOUSE DEMOCRATS UNVEIL REDISTRICTING PLAN, MAPS

Plan moves two NCCo districts downstate, retains majority-minority districts

DOVER – The House Democratic Caucus released its proposed redistricting plan and maps for the House's 41 representative districts Thursday and announced a public hearing on the plan for next week.

The proposal adds two new districts in Kent and Sussex counties – where population grew by 25.9 percent and 28.1 percent, respectively – by closing two districts in New Castle County – where population grew at a much slower 7.6 percent during the past decade. The Democratic Caucus plan also preserves existing majority-minority districts in and around the city of Wilmington and groups the growing Hispanic population in and around Georgetown together in one district, increasing its percentage of the population in that district.

The House of Representatives is tasked with redrawing the districts every 10 years based on the decennial federal census. The census data was provided to Delaware in March, and the House began a month-long public input process in April before completing the draft plan this week.

The plan House Democrats unveiled Thursday meets the rigorous criteria set forth by state and federal guidelines:

- Each representative district must contain an average of 21,900 residents and be within plus or minus 5 percent (20,805 to 22,995 people);
- As much as possible, each district must:
 - Be formed of contiguous territory;
 - Be nearly equal in population;
 - Be bounded by major roads, streams or other natural boundaries;
 - Not be created so as to unduly favor any person or political party;
- Where possible, attempt to retain majority-minority districts (districts where more than half the population is a minority);

Rep. Schwartzkopf noted that re-drawing the districts was not something as simple as moving a line on the map. They had to use census blocks to move populations around. Census blocks could range in population from less than 10 people to more than 1,500, which is larger than the minimum or maximum deviation allowed for a district.

The plan also uses municipal boundaries, major roadways and natural borders – such as the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, county lines and other bodies of water – as much as possible to form district lines.

Under the Democratic Caucus’ plan:

- Existing districts where more than half the population is a minority would remain and would retain their majority-minority status;
- Two northern New Castle County districts would be closed. Each is adjacent to multiple districts that fall well short of the minimum population requirement, and the closed districts’ population would be used to bring the neighboring districts into compliance with the population requirement:
 - The 11th District, a saw-tooth-shaped district in the Talleyville area that touches four districts that fall an average of 3,000 short of the ideal population size, would be closed;
 - The 20th District, a Hockessin-area district that touches four districts that are an average of 2,800 short of the ideal population size, also would be closed;
- Two new districts would be created below the C&D Canal, where the bulk of the population increase took place:
 - The new 11th District would encompass the southwestern quadrant of southern New Castle County south of Middletown and west of U.S. 13 and the northwestern quadrant of Kent County. It would include the municipalities of Townsend, Kenton, Hartly and Marydel;
 - The new 20th District would incorporate the municipalities of Lewes and Milton, running south near Long Neck, encompassing the Harbeson area and reaching west near the city limits of Georgetown;
- The 37th District would include all of Georgetown and see its Hispanic population increase from 17.22 percent to 19.39 percent.

The population increase in southern New Castle County was too much for two districts but not enough for three districts. Simultaneously, the 29th District had about 5,000 more than the maximum number of people allowed. Those two factors led to the location of the new 11th District. In eastern Sussex County, the 14th, 36th, 37th and 41st Districts needed to shed about 15,800 people to reach the ideal district size, prompting the creation of the new 20th District.

The House Democratic Caucus will hold a public hearing on its redistricting proposal on Thursday, May 26, at 7 p.m. in the House Chamber at Legislative Hall in Dover. PDFs of each of the 41 proposed districts are available online at the state’s General Assembly website, <http://legis.delaware.gov>, under the “Redistricting Information” link in the middle of the main page.

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